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SUBJECT: DRC ELECTIONS: CARTER CENTER CONCLUDES FIRST-ROUND  
VOTE "CREDIBLE"

REF: KINSHASA 1220

¶1. (U) Summary: The Carter Center concluded in a September 1 statement that the DRC's July 30 presidential and legislative elections were "credible," despite important procedural and logistical flaws. While voting and the counting process were generally successful, the Center noted certain irregularities that undermined the transparency and credibility of the process. Overall, however, the Center reported that election workers acted professionally under difficult conditions, and any potential problems with the voting process did not affect the ultimate outcome of the first-round presidential results. End summary.

¶2. (U) The Carter Center issued September 1 its second post-election statement on the DRC's July 30 presidential and legislative vote, concluding that the results for both elections are "credible." The Carter Center stated that it did not find evidence of widespread or systematic manipulation of the elections, although a number of important procedural flaws "weakened the transparency" of the process. Most of the "irregularities," however, stemmed from "innocent attempts" by election workers to cope with logistical difficulties as they arose. The statement declared that the results of the first-round presidential election are "sufficiently clear-cut" that the overall outcome could not "realistically be affected" by any of these shortcomings.

¶3. (U) The Carter Center generally praised the work of the Independent Electoral Commission (CEI) and its officials, noting that polling station staff took their responsibilities seriously and worked diligently under difficult conditions. The Center went on to say that all involved in the organization of the DRC's election can share in a genuine sense of accomplishment. Serious problems were noted, though, in the CEI's training of workers and its apparent lack of planning for the collection of voting materials after the election, particularly in Kinshasa. The statement said the collection of results largely fell into disarray, raising concerns about the chain of custody and possible manipulation of ballots. Because of such breakdowns in procedures, the Carter Center stated it cannot properly respond to allegations that ballots may have been falsified after voting ended.

¶4. (U) Referring to the August 20-22 violence in Kinshasa after the announcement of provisional presidential results, the Carter Center called on President Kabila and Vice President Bemba to respect the verdict of the people during the October 29 run-off election. The Center said both candidates should support the democratic process to its completion, but added that if steps are not taken to control each side's respective armed factions, it fears that the

run-off election may spark "serious violence."

¶5. (U) Overall, the Carter Center determined that the first-round vote was a "significant achievement," although the shortcomings of the initial process will "make it more difficult for the CEI, observers, and party witnesses to prove that the election process was without significant flaw." To ensure greater transparency for the next round, the Carter Center recommended a series of remedies to be implemented by the CEI before the October 29 vote. Among their recommendations were the consolidation and completion of voter lists well in advance of the next election, the simplification of ballot-counting procedures, a realistic plan for the collection and safeguarding of results, and improved training for polling center staff.

¶6. (U) The Carter Center will continue to have some long-term observers in the DRC to follow the electoral process in advance of the October 29 election. Carter Center officials in Kinshasa could not say as of September 1, however, how many observers they would be able to field for the second round.

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